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By Rep. Mike Pence

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As a new Republican majority in Congress wrestles with historic budget deficits and unprecedented public debt, many Americans are rightly asking not only "How did we get here?" but "How can we make sure this never happens again?" The answer to the latter question and the key to our fiscal future lies in the wisdom of the past.

To ensure a lasting victory for limited government, it will not be enough simply to cut government spending. We must permanently reduce the size and scope of the federal government by restoring to the states and the people those responsibilities and resources that are rightfully theirs under the Constitution of the United States.

If the republic is to survive, we must have a revival of federalism and state-based constitutionalism.

Not that this is a new idea. In his first inaugural address, President Ronald Reagan asserted, "The federal government did not create the states, the states created the federal government," adding that it was time to "demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted the federal government and those reserved to the states and the people."

One year later, Mr. Reagan came to Indiana to address the issue of federalism before a joint session of our state General Assembly. He used that Hoosier setting as a backdrop to announce a new presidential commission on federalism, which he called the "new phase" of the "great American experiment." As a start, he offered to return 40 federal programs and the revenues associated with them back to the states. The commission and its work fell flat, but Mr.

Reagan was right 30 years ago, and he is more right today. For the efforts to succeed, it would have required unprecedented leadership rising at the state and local level, which is exactly what is happening today.

Perhaps providentially, the leadership and initiative that Mr. Reagan called for 30 years ago is emerging in states across America.

Consider the courageous stands that governors in New Jersey, Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana are taking on behalf of fiscal discipline and reform; or the actions taken by states rejecting the individual mandate in Obamacare and opposing the imposition of cap-and-trade; or responding to inaction by the federal government on illegal immigration and traditional marriage. In state after state, we find unprecedented leadership and initiative that is changing the dynamics of our national debate.

With so many states taking a stand in so many different ways for their constitutional significance, it is clear that this is no temporary trend in American politics. We are witnessing the rise of the states.

Those who are fighting to restore fiscal solvency to the national government must come to embrace the rise of the states and see them as full partners in this great cause, agents of change with the competence and courage to lead our nation back.

To win a lasting victory for limited government, we not only must take notice of this new dynamic, we must encourage it. We must support those who fight within the federal system and assist those leaders at the state level who are leading the fight from without.

The states were our past. They were forged from the wilderness. The states hold the promise of the future. If there is to be a rebirth of constitutional governance in America, it will come from the states or not at all.

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